A Fair Deal for Victims of Crime.

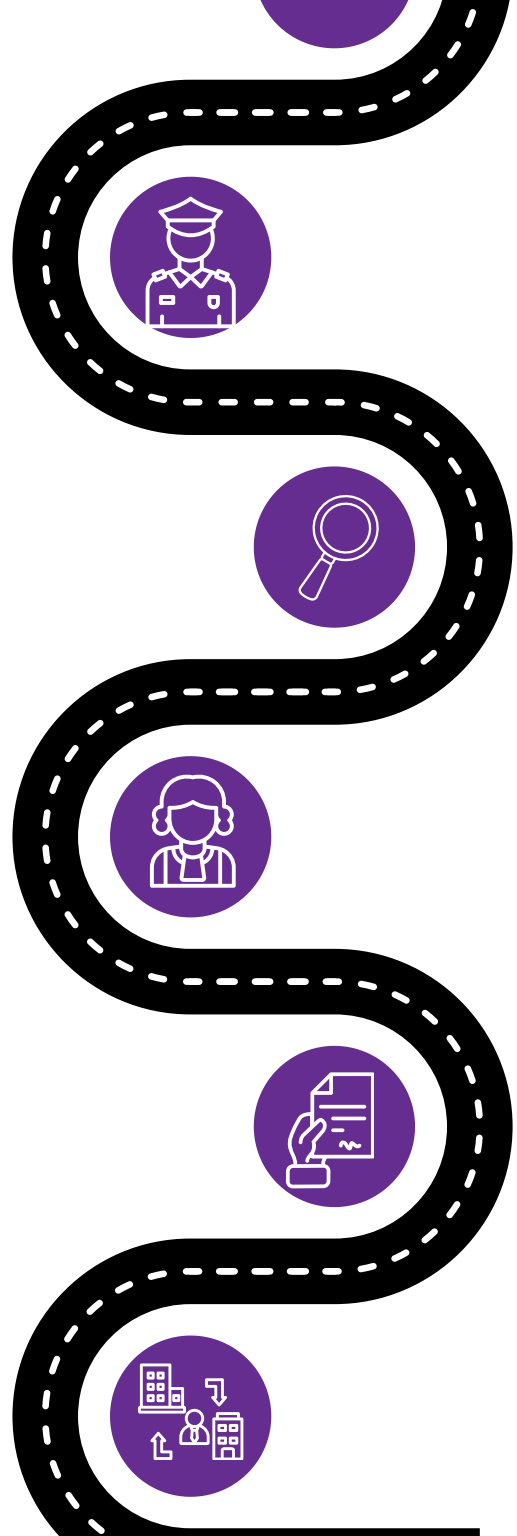
COMMISSIONER FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

Delivering what victims need when they need it.

In the next Assembly mandate, we're asking you to support a **fair deal for victims of crime**, that delivers what they need when they need it.

It means delivering for victims of crime so that their **rights are upheld, their needs are met and their voices are heard.**

Right now, victims are being failed at every step.



Reporting

Investigation

At Court

Post-trial

Outside the Criminal Justice System



At the reporting stage, victims tell us they often don't feel confident that they will be taken seriously. They don't beleive their voice will be heard or their rights upheld. For some, language and cultural differences are added barriers to reporting.



At the investigation and prosecution stage, there is often poor communication from police and prosecution, victims aren't being advised of bail conditions imposed on the accused and victims tell us they often find themselves having to do their own investigative work and have an unbearable wait for their case to get to court.



Our courts aren't designed with victims in mind, both physically and the way they operate. At Court victims tell us that they often face a great deal of uncertainty. For example many victims of sexual crimes don't know whether special measures will be granted until their trial is just about to begin. Many victims have told us that they continue to be treated unfairly and with disrespect when in court. Many victims feel overwhelmed and re-traumitised by the process itself.



Post-trial, the lack of a victim-centred approach continues. Victims are left to pick up the pieces following the ordeal of a trial. Many tell us they feel like they are considered completely unimportant during the parole process, not being kept up to date in the way they deserve.



Outside the criminal justice system victims tell us that the private law family court system is being used by abusers to continue harming their victims. They tell us Non-Molestation orders aren't working and they tell us there isn't a victim-centred approach when it comes to meeting needs in terms of health and housing e.g. victims tell us they have to fight for their counselling services.

What could a fair deal look like?

A fair deal for victims looks like a **Northern Ireland Assembly** that takes every opportunity to

- Strengthen victims **rights**
- Increase **advocacy** and **support** for victims
- Amplify victims' **voices**

Over the last four years, we've listened to **victims' voices**.

Throughout that work, we've identified **some changes** that could help make a fair deal for victims of crime in Northern Ireland.



Needs Assessment. If we commit to a properly funded needs assessment service based on the Quebec model we can make sure we are meeting victims needs at evey stage of the process and that victims have an identified contact for each stage of their journey.



Once we know what a victim needs **an independent advocacy service** could help make sure that victim gets access to the information and support they need.



We know that victims of certain crimes (e.g. victims of domestic and sexual abuse) have specific needs, that's why if we looked at **expanding specialist courts with specially trained staff** in Northern Ireland we could reduce the harm our justice system causes these victims and increase public confidence and safety.



We need to change our **approach to victims of crime post-sentencing**. Victims have needs after a sentence has been passed and these aren't being recongised. We must change our attitude to one that continues to care for victims after a sentence is passed, including, for example, making sure victims can access counselling services. Victims should have greater rights and participation in the **parole process.**



Outside the criminal justice system we must see a **reform of private law family courts** to make them truly child-centred and prevent them from causing further harm to victims of domestic abuse. We need to see sustainable funding for the **community and voluntary sector** who provide such important support and we need to see **sustainable funding** for mental health support for victims of crime.

What can you do?

These suggestions could make a real difference, but if we're going to create a fair deal for victims of crime after the next election, **then we need your help**.

If we're going to achieve a fair deal for victims of crime we need **every Minister and MLA** working proactively within their remits to make positive changes for victims.

The next mandate is an exciting opportunity to make a real difference.

In your manifesto and in the coming election campaign will you agree to support a **fair deal for victims of crime?**

For more information or to discuss any of these issues contact us:

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